



## Office of Management's Monthly Newsletter

# The Beacon

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Food Safety and Inspection Service  
Office of Management  
Ronald Hicks, Deputy Administrator

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**bea-con** (bê ' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or

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### FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

#### **National Partnership for Reinventing Government** *by Tom Billy*

Attachment 1 to this edition of the *Beacon* is a memo to all FSIS employees on the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR). The memo reports results of the NPR survey from last July. If you have any questions on this issue, please contact Torrie Mattes, Planning Staff on 202-501-7138.

### RON'S CORNER

#### **FSIS 2000 Budget Update** *by Ron Hicks* *Deputy Administrator* *Office of Management* *Telephone: 202-720-4425*

I last reported on the FSIS FY 2000 budget in the March edition of the *Beacon*. Since then, on June 8, the House passed an appropriations bill for FY 2000 that would fund FSIS at \$653.0 million. The House version includes an amendment offered by Representative Meek (FL) that would prohibit the use of funds to permit the importation of meat and poultry from countries not determined by the Secretary to have inspection requirements that achieve an

equivalent level of sanitary protection.

On June 17 the Senate Appropriations Committee marked up its FY 2000 agriculture appropriations bill. The Senate markup provides FSIS with \$638.4 million, and includes two increases over FY99: \$18.6 million for pay costs (rather than the full Administration request of \$20.3 million) and \$2.9 million for the President's Food Safety Initiative. Floor action in the Senate is expected the week of June 21. For FY 1999, FSIS is funded at \$617.0 million.

We will continue to keep you apprised of significant developments in the FY2000 budget process in future editions of the *Beacon*.

#### **Boston District Office to Close**

We are currently implementing the closure of the FSIS Boston District Office and the merger of the Boston District with the Albany District. (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands will be assigned to the Atlanta District.) The 1996 Agency-wide reorganization enabled us to significantly improve the management of field activities; the Boston realignment will provide another opportunity to further this goal. Eliminating one district will enable FSIS to streamline administrative and management activities, to realign geographic boundaries in response to shifting workload, and to realize a modest but

significant annual savings. This opportunity is especially appealing during these fiscally limited times.

#### **Alaska Program Takeover**

FSIS has received formal notice that effective July 30 the state of Alaska will terminate its state inspection program due to budget constraints. Alaska has 13 state-inspected plants and 6 employees. FSIS has begun working with state authorities on an orderly designation of the state inspection program.

#### **Workplace Violence Incident Report**

On Tuesday, June 8, at Est. 19336 M, Nebraska Beef Company plant in Omaha, Nebraska, a plant employee was shot and killed with a handgun in the plant near the USDA government office (two FSIS employees were in the inspection office at the time). Earlier in June, an inspector was robbed while walking from the parking lot to the inspection office, and the personal automobile of the Inspector-in-Charge was stolen from

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the parking lot.

The plant has since made some improvements that should increase security for both FSIS employees and plant employees. The parking lot has been fenced in, and a security guard has been hired to patrol the parking lot. Plant management also is considering other locations for use as reserved parking spaces that would provide maximum security for government and plant personnel.

As you may know, the facilities that FSIS occupies, whether a plant, office building, or laboratory, are managed and controlled by others. For plants, this is normally the company that slaughters or processes the product, while at offices and laboratories it is generally either the General Services Administration or other USDA agencies. The senior FSIS manager at all Agency facilities should work with their landlord to assess and improve, if necessary, the security at their location.

Any member of the FSIS Workplace Violence Assessment Team can be contacted for information on minimum workplace security standards. The members of the team and their phone numbers are:

John Campbell - 301-504-3989, toll free pager # 888-894-6217  
Roslyn Robinson - 202-720-5657  
Milo Christianson - 612-370-2010 ext. 2539  
Bob Holloway - 541-461-6388

I am concerned about the health and security of all members of the FSIS family. Anything that FSIS management can do to minimize these types of incidences helps to ensure the well-being of all employees.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

### Human Resources Division Reorganizes Its Field Office

*by Marlin Waller, Director  
Human Resources Division  
Telephone: 202-720-4827*

Earlier this year, the Human Resources Division developed a proposal for restructuring operations in Minneapolis, Minnesota and transferring some functions from Headquarters to the Minneapolis location. These changes are designed to enhance our service to customers, help balance the workload in the Division, provide more focus for overall Division functions, and provide a flatter, more flexible structure. The restructuring plan was subsequently approved by the Administrator and the Minneapolis location, now referred to as the "Human Resources Field Office", was restructured into two branches, the Benefits and Field Classification and Compensation Branch (BFCCB) and the Field Employment Services Branch (FESB). Upon approval of the new structure, HRD advertised the two new branch chief positions and Marlin Waller, Director, HRD and Yvonne Davis, Deputy Director, conducted interviews of the highly qualified candidates. HRD is pleased to announce the recent selection of Karen Benham as the new Chief of the Field Employment Services Branch and Jim Duos as the Chief of the Benefits and Field Classification and Compensation Branch.

Karen and Jim join other branch chiefs at headquarters (Karen Messmore, Chief, Employment Services and Policy Branch; Dennis O'Malley, Chief, Classification and Compensation Branch; Dan Burkard, Chief, Organization and Employee Development Branch; and Pat Forslind, Chief, Performance,

Evaluation and Recognition Branch). A copy of the Division's new organization chart, along with information about each branch function and a listing of Division employees can be found on the HRD homepage ([www.fsis.usda.gov/OM/HRD/default.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OM/HRD/default.htm)) which can be accessed from a link on the FSIS homepage (see following article section). Information on the restructured organization will also be provided to employees in a hardcopy version by HRD in the near future.

Although HRD has restructured its field office, employees should continue to contact the same numbers for services as they have done in the past. They can contact the Human Resources Field Office at 1-800-370-9747 or 612-370-2000.

Also, all correspondence, applications for promotion, lateral reassignment requests, etc. can still be sent to the same centralized mailing address as the former Personnel Operations Branch as follows:

Human Resources Field Office  
Butler Square West, 4th Floor  
100 North Sixth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Envelopes preprinted with "Personnel Operations Branch" at the above address may be used until current stock is depleted and reprinted envelopes become available.

Any questions on the new structure can be referred to the respective branches or to me.

### Human Resources Division Homepage

The FSIS Human Resources Division (HRD) is proud to announce the opening of their new homepage and presence on the Internet at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OM/HRD/default.htm>

It can also be accessed by clicking the link for Human Resources on the FSIS homepage, <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/> or from the Office of Management homepage at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OM/adserv.htm>.

In the HRD homepage, you will find information about the HRD, its functions, locations, and key phone numbers. There is a section for employment information, where you can get Agency employment information including vacancy announcements; a section which includes a variety of forms and publications; and a page of information on news and upcoming events in the Human Resources arena. We have also included a page of Human Resources links that will take you to various other Government sites containing valuable Human Resources information.

For employees that do not have access to the Internet, HRD will continue to distribute hardcopies of vacancy announcements and other important information. We will also continue to make it available in the Personnel public folder in Outlook for Outlook users. In addition, information about the HRD and human resources items will continue to be available in the HPDESK Library under the Personnel catalog.

Please take a minute and check out HRD's new Homepage. Comments or questions can be sent using the e-mail link provided on the page.

### **Retirement**

The goal we've worked toward our entire career. It's an exciting and yet an apprehensive time in our life. It's not too different from our first "real" date or car or job. Legislation over the last 10 years has dramatically altered and complicated the benefits related to retirement. In order to

enjoy it fully, you should be as informed as soon as possible on what to expect. The Human Resources Field Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota on 612-370-2000 or 800-370-3747, Benefits and Workers' Compensation Section, is ready to aid you in this transitional phase of your life. Give us a call - your future is our present.

### **U.S. Savings Bonds**

When you file a change of address, it will not change your savings bond address. This change should be made by completing an Authorization for Purchase and Request for Change, United States Savings Bonds, SB-2152. Field employees may request these forms by utilizing the fax on demand service of the Human Resources Field Office in Minneapolis at 800-370-3747, extension 2002. For field employees who do not have access to a fax machine, savings bond forms may be requested from the Pay and Leave Unit in Minneapolis by calling 1-800-370-3747. Headquarters employees should contact the Employment Services and Policy Branch in Washington on 202-720-6617. Completed forms and/or questions should be directed to these two offices respectively.

### **Progress Reviews**

As a part of the performance appraisal process, ALL supervisors are required to conduct periodic reviews during the appraisal cycle. Reviews for the following groups of employees will need to be performed:

#### *M-Z Bargaining Unit Employees*

According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article XXI, Section B, periodic reviews between a bargaining unit employee and the rating supervisor shall take place every 4 months during the appraisal period. One of these reviews shall also coincide with the discussion of

the annual performance rating. Therefore, for M-Z employees, grades 1-12, the first 4 month progress review must be completed by September 1.

In conducting these reviews, refer to the progress review checklist in any User's Guide for specific points to cover in the discussion with the employee. Employee and supervisor should initial and date block 16 of the FSIS 4430-5 form to certify completion of the progress review discussion.

#### *A-L Non-Bargaining Unit Employees*

For non-bargaining unit employees, supervisors should conduct progress reviews within 5-7 months of the beginning of the appraisal cycle. Therefore, for A-L employees, progress reviews must be completed 30 days before or after September 1.

Questions related to performance appraisal from field employees may be directed to the Field Classification, Performance and Recognition Section of the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-9747 and from headquarters employees to the Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch on 202-720-7983.

### **Responding To Vacancy Announcements**

A well-written application form is a crucial part of a successful job search. But no matter how well written, applications are not referred to the selecting official unless all eligibility requirements are met. Employees are reminded that it is the applicant's responsibility to submit all required documents, as outlined in the vacancy announcement. To assure fairness for all that respond to a vacancy announcement, incomplete or late applications for promotion receive no further consideration.

Remember to respond to all job elements in the vacancy announcement, with no more than two one-sided pages per element, using a legible print size. Print should be no smaller than a "10-point" font on a computer printer or 12 characters per inch on the typewriter. In short, applicants must carefully follow all instructions listed in the vacancy announcement. By doing so, employees are more likely to successfully navigate their chosen career path.

Questions involving application procedures should be referred to the Employment Section of the Human Resources Field Office on 800-370-3747 for field employees and to the Employment Services and Policy Branch on 202-720-6617 for headquarters employees.

### **Circuit Supervisor Open Continuous Vacancy Announcement**

*Note: Supervisory Food Technologist positions classified at the GS-1382-11/12 level are not covered under this open continuous announcement.*

Completing an application form can be a time-consuming, difficult process. To help streamline the application process, the Human Resources Field Office will be issuing an open continuous announcement on July 6, 1999, to allow applicants to apply once for any Circuit Supervisor interdisciplinary GS-701/1382-12/13 Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer/ Supervisory Food Technologist position they are interested in. This open continuous announcement will be used to recruit for these positions throughout the United States until further notice. Separate vacancy announcements will not be issued unless there are insufficient applicants for a particular location.

Applicants should specify their location preferences by city and state

if requesting specific locations; county and state if they desire consideration for select counties within a state; or state only if they are interested in any location within the state. Applications will remain on file for up to five years, provided the employee submits a current performance appraisal annually (before July 1 if your last name starts with A-L and October 1 if your last name starts with M-Z) and the announcement remains open.

The promotion panel will be held during the month of October 1999. The first application cutoff date for panel purposes will be October 1, 1999. Applications paneled will be used to fill positions until the next cutoff date. All required information must be received by the Human Resources Field Office by the close of business on the designated cutoff date to be paneled during that month. Otherwise, the application will be held until the next panel. After the October 1, 1999 cutoff, application receipt cutoff dates will be the first of January, April, July and October until the announcement closes.

Applicants that are rated Best Qualified by the promotion panel will be referred to the Selecting Official when the District Office submits a request (SF-52) to fill a GS-701/1382-12/13 Circuit Supervisor vacancy. The Human Resources Field Office in Minneapolis does not have information on what specific locations will be filled because this information is subject to change. Applicants are encouraged to request consideration in any location nationwide, where they would be willing to receive consideration.

Announcements and a letter outlining the Circuit Supervisor open continuous announcements will be sent to all GS-11 through GS-13 Field Employees the first week in July. If you have any questions or concerns on how the process will

work, feel free to call Rick Traetow or Steve Prochnow at 800-370-3747.

### **Food Inspector Intermittents Seeking Full-Time Employment**

The full-time Food Inspector (FI) Register is administered by the Recruitment and Examining (R&E) Section in the Human Resources Field Office (HRFO) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Although this Section works for FSIS, they perform the work of a different Federal agency, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). In doing so, it is required to operate under OPM rules and regulations. These rules and regulations may, at times, cause confusion as to applicant responsibility. The R&E welcomes the opportunity to explain some of these responsibilities in more detail. Following are several questions (Q) and answers (A) that relate to intermittent or "when actually employed" (WAE) FI's who seek full-time employment:

**Q:** I am currently employed as a FI, GS-5 on an intermittent (WAE) tour of duty. I am scheduled to take the FI test soon. If I pass the test, how do I get on the GS-7 Register after I am promoted to GS-7?

**A:** IF your application to take the FI test reflected that you are a FI, GS-5 on an intermittent (WAE) tour of duty, and you pass the FI test you will be sent a Notice of Results informing you of your test score, AND a letter with a questionnaire attached. The letter is provided as a courtesy, and details the specific steps YOU MUST TAKE to receive a rating at the GS-7 level to be placed on the GS-7 Register. You cannot receive consideration for full-time FI, GS-7 job unless you are on the GS-7 Register. It is vitally important that upon being promoted to GS-7 you complete the questionnaire by very carefully following the instructions, and submit it to the R&E for evaluation and rating. Upon

completion of the rating you will be sent a new Notice of Results reflecting your GS-7 rating. Your rating at the GS-7 level may be lower than your rating at the GS-5. Keep in mind that your GS-5 rating is based strictly on your test score and any additional points that may have been added due to veteran's preference. Your GS-7 rating is based strictly on the information YOU PROVIDED on your GS-7 questionnaire or application. As of the date on the Notice of Results, you will be eligible for consideration at the GS-7 level.

*Note: If your application to take the FI test did not reflect that you are a FI, GS-5 on an intermittent (WAE) tour of duty, the answer to the next question applies to your situation too.*

**Q:** I am currently employed as a FI, GS-5 on an intermittent (WAE) tour of duty. I was hired after I took and passed the FI test. I am on the GS-5 Register. How do I get on the GS-7 Register after I am promoted to GS-7?

**A:** To be placed on the GS-7 Register YOU MUST request a GS-7 questionnaire (800-370-3747), OR submit an application with very detailed information about the duties you perform at the GS-5 level, and a request for a GS-7 rating. If you request a questionnaire, follow the instructions very carefully, and return it to the R&E for evaluation and rating. Your background would be evaluated, using set rating schedules, as would any applicant. With the one year of documented experience as a GS-5 Food Inspector, however, you would qualify at the GS-7 level. Upon completion of the rating you will be sent a new Notice of Results reflecting your GS-7 rating. Your rating at the GS-7 level may be lower than your rating at the GS-5. Keep in mind that your GS-5 rating is based strictly on your test score and any additional points that may have been added due to veteran's preference.

Your GS-7 rating is based strictly on the information YOU PROVIDED on your GS-7 questionnaire or application. As of the date on the Notice of Results, you will be eligible for consideration at the GS-7 level.

**Q:** I am currently employed as a FI, GS-5, on an intermittent (WAE) tour of duty. I have applied to the full-time Register, and have received a letter advising me that my application has been reviewed, and I will be scheduled to take the FI test. What is the date, and specific location of the test?

**A:** The FSIS has a contract with the OPM to administer, and score the written FI test. OPM will establish the actual test date, and advise you, in writing, approximately two weeks before the test, of the date, and specific location. At that time, they will also provide you with sample questions, and forms you need to complete, and bring with you to the test.

**Q:** I have taken and passed the FI test. How long before I will be selected for a full-time job?

**A:** We are unable to predict a specific period of time before selection. When a vacancy is approved to be filled a request is submitted to POB, Employment. The Employment Section requests a list of names from the R&E. The R&E issues a list of names based on OPM rules and regulations. Names are referred based on your test score and veteran's preference and how your test score and veteran's preference compare to other eligibles that have indicated an interest in the geographical zone in which the vacancy exists. Selection is made from this list of names in accordance with OPM rules and regulations. More specifically, selection must be made from the top three interested eligibles, and a non-veteran cannot be selected before a veteran. These rules and regulations apply even if

you are currently employed by FSIS as a FI on an intermittent (WAE) tour of duty.

If you have questions regarding any of the Registers (new or full-time employment consideration only) administered by the R&E (FI full-time, FI intermittent, and VMO), please feel free to contact the Recruitment and Examining Section of the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-3747.

### May/June Retirements

Samuel C. Beckley, Spvy Food Tech, OFO, Seattle, WA, 06/03/99, 25 Years

Alfred Canady, Jr., FI, OFO, Elizabeth, NJ, 06/02/99, 34 Years

Jimmie N. Coutentos, FI, OFO, Independence, IA, 06/03/99, 31 Years

Rudolfo M. Gonzalez, Jr., FI, OFO, Palestine, TX, 04/30/99, 34 Years

Gwen J. Groves, FI, OFO, Willows, CA, 06/05/99, 22 Years

Steve Head, FI, OFO, Douglas, GA, 06/05/99, 4 Years

Herman E. Johnson, FI, OFO, Pomona, CA, 06/03/99, 26 Years

James R. Minchew, FI, OFO, Cornelia, GA, 05/22/99, 17 Years

Rudolph Ramos, FI, OFO, Bethlehem, GA, 06/05/99, 5 Years

Harold L. Strandberg, SVMO, OFO, Butte, MT, 05/31/99, 19 Years

Gail A. Vasco, Phys Science Tech, OFO, Athens, GA, 06/05/99, 36 Years

Anita L. Voiselle, Supvy Contract Spec, OM, Washington, D.C., 06/04/99, 15 Years

James J. Webster, FI, OFO, Indianapolis, IN, 06/03/99, 30 Years

Edgar J. Whatley, SVMO, OFO, Collinsville, AL, 06/12/99, 29 Years

### Leave Transfer Recipients

Martha Stamps  
FO, AR; Serious Illness

Jackie Copeland

FO, DC; Illness

Mary Ann Riley

OPPDE, DC; Illness  
Esther Reed;  
 FO, CA; Illness  
Annie Stewart  
 POB, MN; Serious Illness  
Kasturi Basu  
 FO, DC; Surgery  
John Roderick  
 FO, MA; Surgery  
Linda Cole  
 OPPDE, DC; Serious Illness  
Sonya West  
 OPPDE, DC; Maternity  
FO-98-0034 \*  
 FO, NY; Surgery  
Mary Burdick  
 FO, PA; Complications w/pregnancy  
Joyce Schultz  
 POB, MN; Serious Illness  
FO-98-0031\*  
 FO, AR; Serious Illness  
Kristine Carroll  
 FO, OK; Surgery  
Michelle Jacobson  
 POB, MN; Maternity  
Stephanie Showell  
 FO, DE; Family Illness  
Jerry Long  
 FO, TN; Illness  
Michael Schwichert  
 FO, CO; Surgery  
FO-98-0042\*  
 FO, DC; Surgery  
Willia Stepney  
 OM, DC; Maternity  
Michelle Carpenter  
 FO, OH; Complications w/pregnancy  
Linda Carey  
 EMS, DC; Surgery  
FO-99-0003\*  
 FO, AR; Serious Illness  
Gary Fetters  
 FO, IA; Serious Illness  
Nancy Clyburn  
 OPHS, DC; Surgery  
FO-99-0007\*  
 FO, SC; Serious Illness  
George Olson  
 FO, MN; Family Illness  
Kellie Upshaw  
 EMS, DC; Maternity  
Traci Edmond  
 EMS, DC; Maternity  
Yolanda Locus  
 OPPDE, DC; Family Illness  
Mary Sutton

OPHS, GA; Complications  
 w/pregnancy  
FO-99-0010\*  
 FO, NC; Surgery  
Cheryl Evans  
 FO, AR; Surgery  
Diana Nolan  
 FO, NY; Serious Illness  
Richard Parmenter  
 FO, GA; Surgery  
Octavia Thomas  
 FO, GA; Complications w/pregnancy  
Mose Tyler  
 FO, CA; Surgery  
Cynthia Dixon  
 OM, DC; Illness  
George Toups  
 FO, LA; Serious Illness  
FO-99-0017\*  
 FO, OH; Surgery  
Marilyn Weber  
 FPC, IA; Illness  
Robert Martz  
 FO, IA; Serious Illness  
Alma Lindsey  
 FO, IL; Illness  
Joseph Banales  
 FO, CA; Illness  
Lorraine Kauffman  
 OM, DC; Maternity  
Charles Olson  
 FO, WI; Serious Illness  
Betty Morgan  
 FO, AR; Family Illness  
Amilcar Lopez  
 FO, AL; Serious Illness  
Carolyn Woolfolk  
 FO, DC; Surgery  
Donna Ogdahl  
 FO, MN; Surgery

\*While not consenting to the publication of their names, certain Leave Transfer Program (LTP) recipients are assigned a number that they may provide to their co-workers if they choose so that donated leave may be transferred to their account. Any questions on the LTP should be referred to the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-3747 for field employees and to the Classification and Compensation Branch for headquarters employees on 202-720-6287.

## TRAVEL

### Close Out of FY98 and FY 99 Relocation Files

by Barbara McNiff

Budget Division

Telephone: 202-720-3061

The Fiscal Services Branch (FSB) is in the process of closing out the files for all relocations that occurred in FY's 98 and 99. If you were authorized to move in those fiscal years, and have not submitted all your travel vouchers to claim your expenses, please do so immediately. If you have not yet exercised your relocation allowances, but intend to do so, you must notify FSB immediately so that funds can be set aside for your relocation vouchers.

Please contact Frances Wilches by phone on 202-720-9605 or by Fax on 202-690-3035 if either of these situations apply to you.

### Contract Air Fares

Employees often ask us, why, in some cases, non-contract air fares are much cheaper than the contract air fares. There are several answers to this question. First, the non-contract fare is frequently a non-refundable fare, whereas the contract fare is fully refundable. Should you purchase a non-refundable ticket? Only if the savings are substantial (e.g. several hundred dollars) and there is a more-than-reasonable certainty that you will make the trip. *If your travel plans are tentative, or you frequently change your travel reservations for either personal or official reasons, you should not purchase non-refundable tickets. Prior to purchasing a non-refundable ticket, you must get approval to do so from you approving official. Then, if the trip is cancelled for any reason, you may be reimbursed for the cost of the unused ticket, or any penalty fees as a miscellaneous expense.*

Secondly, the non-contract fare usually applies to tickets that are issued at least 30 days in advance and paid for immediately. Contract fares are valid anytime, even on the day of the flight. Can you purchase tickets up to 30 days in advance? Yes, but that puts the pressure on you to complete your vouchers as soon as you get back from the trip so that you can get reimbursed and pay your NationsBank charge card bill.

Finally, the non-contract fare may be a special or promotional fare. Can you purchase a ticket if it is under a special or promotional fare? *Yes, but only if its available to the general public and not restricted to government and military travelers.*

### The Mileage Minute

Employees with multiple duty points, who vary the order in which they visit their duty sites, may be reimbursed up to 25 miles (each way) when they travel directly from their residences to a point within their official duty station. Therefore the mileage reimbursement from the employee's residence to the first duty point plus the mileage from the last duty point back to the employee's residence may not exceed a total of 50 miles. In addition, employees will be reimbursed for all mileage between duty points.

## SUPPLIES

### Appropriate Emergency Orders

by Pete Bridgeman

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4222

Two and a half years ago, we established the Toll-Free Supply Hotline to accommodate our field customers when unavoidable emergency needs for forms or specialty items arose. We have stressed that placing emergency orders should be limited to situations

that are unavoidable, such as when a plant is exporting to a country they hadn't previously exported to, and the new export form is needed in a hurry. We are happy to accommodate the legitimate emergencies, and we always welcome your questions and inquiries into the status of your orders. That is what the Hot Line was established to provide, and we work hard to ensure that it meets that need.

We are finding that some customers are making a habit of having "emergencies" on a regular basis. We need to re-emphasize that it is not a routine phone-in order line. Unfortunately, we don't have the resources to provide that type of a service to all of our 4,000+ field customers. This detracts from our ability to respond to the appropriate emergencies in a timely manner.

We ask that you consider how desperate your emergency need really is before calling in and requesting an order to be shipped overnight. Ask yourself these questions; "Is this an emergency due to my lack of proper planning, or was it truly unavoidable?" "Is this my 3rd 'emergency' order this month?" If it could have been avoided, or if you find that you are placing a lot of "emergency" orders, please consider what you can do now, to avoid these emergencies next time.

At what point do you need to place a routine order so that you'll receive the item(s) on time, before it becomes an emergency? You may find it helpful to establish a "reorder point" for each item, which is the quantity of that item on hand at the time you need to place a routine replenishment order. Generally, if you give a routine order a month's lead-time, you should receive everything except items that are out of stock at the Landover Service Center. Take these steps to avoid the unnecessary emergencies in the future. This will also help us to be in a better position to handle your

real emergencies when they do come up.

### Status of Catalog Update

We last reported that an updated catalog would be distributed sometime in July. We have decided to hold off on the printing and distribution of the new catalog. The Landover Service Center plans to relocate to Beltsville, MD sometime during the first quarter of next fiscal year. Until we're sure when this will occur, and what the new location's address will be, we are going to delay the printing and distribution of the new catalog. We would rather have this information included in the new catalog, and coordinate the distribution of it with the moving of the center to the new location, to avoid any possible confusion in the field concerning where to send orders.

We included an addendum in the May issue of the *Service Beacon*, which had all new items added to the inventory since the previous edition of the catalog (April 1998) was issued. We will also have an addendum to the catalog available at Landover, Item Number FSIS-CAT-ADD1. This can be ordered with Forms and Specialty Items. We will keep you posted on developments with the catalog and the relocation of the Landover Service Center.

### Gel Bottles

In response to numerous complaints of the soft gel packs breaking open and leaking, we had the vendor for the sample shipping containers, ISC Inc., develop a hard plastic gel bottle to replace the soft gel packs. We have now begun to replace the gel packs in the sample containers from the labs with hard plastic gel bottles. Each of the three FSIS laboratories has received an initial shipment of the gel bottles to begin replacing the soft gel packs as needed. The remaining soft gel packs will be used

up until supplies are exhausted, but will eventually all be replaced with the gel bottles. We're expecting the gel bottles to be much more durable and to last a lot longer.

## VEHICLES

### **Unmarked Government Vehicles**

*by Pete Bridgeman*

*Administrative Services Division*

*Telephone: 301-504-4222*

We've had a number of questions regarding unmarked government vehicles, and requests for state license plates instead of government plates to be issued with the vehicles. We do not have the authority to grant permission for state license plates on government vehicles. This authority can only come from GSA, through the Department of Agriculture's Property Management Division. The following explains the regulation concerning this issue, and the procedures to follow if you feel you have a legitimate exemption to this regulation.

The regulation governing this is contained in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 41, Subpart 101-38.2, "Registration, Identification, and Exemptions." This regulation requires all government vehicles to display government license plates unless an exemption is authorized. The regulation authorizes the use of state license plates only on government vehicles used to conduct investigative or law enforcement activities. Vehicles used in conjunction with our Regulatory Program and driven by Compliance Officers are exempted under this provision. Any vehicles not directly connected with law enforcement, investigative or intelligence duties involving security activities are not exempted.

Requests for exemptions, other than for Compliance, must be submitted in writing to this office (see address

below), with the following information included:

- (1) A description of the duties which mandate the use of an unidentified government vehicle.
- (2) Reasons why the use of an unidentified government vehicle is essential.
- (3) Any life-threatening and/or safety-related reasons for the driver to require an unidentified government vehicle.

This office will then submit the request to the Department of Agriculture's Property Management Division for review and recommendation. If they recommend approval, it will then be forwarded to the General Services Administration (GSA) for final approval or disapproval.

Address to send requests to:  
USDA, FSIS, OM, ASD, PPMVSS  
Attention: Brian McNiff  
Maildrop 5230  
5601 Sunnyside Ave - 2L-190-D  
Beltsville, MD 20705-5230

### **Government Vehicle Assignments, Replacements and Turn-In**

*by Brian McNiff*

*Administrative Services Division*

*Telephone: 301-504-4221*

All requests for government vehicles must conform to the Agriculture Property Management Regulations. These regulations support federal policy cited in CFR Title 41, Chapter 101, Subchapter G – Aviation, Transportation and Motor Vehicles. This regulation states that the only sedan authorized for official government use is the compact or subcompact sedan. The policy of this office is to order only compact or subcompact sedans for all FSIS field activities. If a vehicle other than the above sedans are required to meet the needs of the agency, i.e. mini-van, pick-up or 4WD utility vehicle, the request must be justified and approved in writing by the District

Manager or the senior FSIS official and submitted to this office. In no situation may an individual request a change in vehicle type through direct correspondence with the General Services Administration (GSA) Fleet Management Center.

The replacement policy for GSA sedans is 60,000 miles or 3 years, whichever comes first. Upon replacement, all drivers are required to submit a new FSIS Form 2450-6 (Government Vehicle Data Sheet) to this office. This is the only means we have of keeping the vehicle database up-to-date.

No driver of a government vehicle should make arrangements to turn-in his vehicle to the Fleet Management Center without checking with this office. In most cases we can transfer the vehicle to another inspector who is requesting a vehicle. Demand for government vehicles is high and the supply is low at this time. Also, prior to retirement, all drivers of government vehicles should make all the necessary arrangements to transfer their vehicle to another inspector. Under no circumstances does the vehicle remain at the residence of a retired employee.

All questions regarding motor vehicles should be directed to Brian McNiff at 301-504-4221.

## ISSUANCES

### **Recent Agency Issuances**

*by Mary Wissman*

*Administrative Services Division*

*Telephone: 301-504-4233*

The following notices and directives have been issued since the June 1999 edition of the *Beacon*. Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opendesk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 16-99 (5/26/99)  
Honor Award Recipients--1999

Notice 17-99 (6/17/99)  
Listeria Monocytogenes  
Reassessment

Directive 8840.1 (6/18/99)  
Enforcement of Refrigeration and  
Labeling Requirements for Shell  
Eggs Packed for Consumer Use

Directive 9010.1 (5/26/99)  
Export Products Returned to the  
United States

Directives and notices are distributed  
automatically to applicable Agency  
employees and offices. Additional  
copies are available from:

USDA, FSIS, ASD, P&DS  
Maildrop 5241  
5601 Sunnyside Avenue  
Beltsville, MD 20705-5241

Tel: 301-504-4242  
Fax: 301-504-4277

## FACILITIES

### USDA Beltsville Office Facility Renamed

by Jo Patterson  
Administrative Services Division  
Telephone: 301-504-3998

On June 2, in remarks to the 1890  
Task Force in Dover, DE, Agriculture  
Secretary Dan Glickman announced  
that he has renamed the USDA  
Beltsville Office Facility as the  
"George Washington Carver  
Complex". The Secretary made the  
change to recognize the

extraordinary contributions that  
George Washington Carver made to  
agricultural innovation and American  
life. The new \$57 million building, in  
Beltsville, MD, houses over a  
thousand USDA employees from 9  
different agencies. The FSIS  
activities housed in this complex are  
the Beltsville District Office, the  
Emergency Programs Branch, and  
the Administrative Services Division.

## OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

### Lockout/Tagout Update

by Tom Wright  
Administrative Services Division  
Telephone: 301-504-4246

*In recent months, we have observed  
and have been informed of an  
alarming development.*  
Lockout/tagout cooperative  
agreements have been written and  
signed by plant and FSIS officials.  
FSIS employees have been provided  
lockout/tagout training and locks are  
available at the workplace.

*However, lockout/tagout is not  
always being performed by inspection  
personnel.* The locks are left behind  
in the government office. Energy  
isolating devices are not being locked  
out. The plug of cord and plug  
electrical devices is not under the  
exclusive control of the inspector.  
No verification of isolation and  
deenergization of machines and  
equipment is being performed. FSIS  
personnel are placing their hands and  
other body parts into and on  
machines and equipment in which  
the unexpected energization, start  
up, or release of stored energy could

cause injury to the employee. It  
appears that a second informal  
"cooperative" agreement has been  
implemented---both the plant and  
FSIS have agreed not to perform  
lockout/tagout.

*The lockout/tagout standard was  
issued by OSHA to protect American  
workers.* OSHA has placed special  
emphasis on FSIS to be in  
compliance with the standard. Your  
safety is jeopardized if you don't use  
lockout/tagout procedures during pre-  
operational process verification  
inspection or verification of pre-  
operational or operational corrective  
action. FSIS employees have been  
injured due to not performing  
lockout/tagout or performing the  
lockout/tagout procedure incorrectly.  
Supervisors need to verify that their  
employees are performing  
lockout/tagout. Inspection personnel  
should make lockout/tagout a routine  
part of the pre-operational or  
operational inspection of machines  
and equipment. Lockout/tagout takes  
a few additional minutes but it can  
save your life or prevent a serious  
injury.

**To comment on this newsletter or  
to submit an article for  
publication, please contact:**

**Kevin Dressman**  
**Editor, The Beacon**  
**USDA, FSIS, OM**  
**Mail Drop 5250**  
**5601 Sunnyside Avenue**  
**Beltsville, MD 20705-5250**  
**Tel: 301-504-4247**  
**Fax: 301-504-4275**  
**kevin.dressman@usda.gov**

The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically on the FSIS OpenDesk and Exchange mail systems as well as on the FSIS Website at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm)

## ATTACHMENT 1

**To:** All Employees

**From:** Thomas J. Billy  
Administrator



**Subject:** National Partnership For Reinventing Government Survey

The National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR) is the Clinton-Gore Administration's initiative to create a government that "works better, costs less, and gets results Americans care about." The NPR chose FSIS as a "High Impact Agency," which means that our programs are vital to the majority of Americans.

Last July, selected FSIS employees were asked to participate in an NPR survey; 295 of you responded. Additionally, approximately 14,000 Federal employees from 48 different agencies completed the same survey. I was pleased with the results. However, the survey also pointed out some areas where FSIS can improve. I'd like to update you on specific measures we are taking to respond in areas where improvement is needed.

Of those who responded, only 31 percent felt that FSIS had "well-defined systems for linking customers' feedback/complaints to employees whom can act on the information." As you may be aware, FSIS has had customer service standards for years. They are on our Web site, at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov), under Mission and Activities, then FSIS Customer Service Standards. As documented on this web site, the Agency has implemented many innovative methods of soliciting and responding to our customers' comments and concerns. However, we are always looking for ways to better respond to our customers' concerns and are currently establishing an employee focus group to reevaluate the standards to assure their meaningfulness and measurability.

We are working in many other areas to address internal and external customer service issues. For instance, in FY 1998 the Internal Control Staff did the following:

- Gathered and analyzed program information on 24 recommendations from the Office of the Inspector General.
- Completed more than 150 inquiries into alleged inappropriate workplace behavior.
- Monitored the Agency's handling of almost 70 complaints of assault, threats, intimidation, or interference with FSIS employees' official duties.

Additional examples come from the Civil Rights Division, which include:

- Meeting upon request with State Meat and Poultry Program officials.
- Holding periodic Town Hall Meetings to increase employee awareness in areas such as Civil Rights, Reasonable Accommodation, and Complaint Processing.
- Holding a Diversity Conference to increase employee awareness.

Survey respondents also thought FSIS could do more to cut red tape. I'd like to give you detailed answers to two of the survey questions: "Has your organization implemented simplified travel regulations?" and "Has your organization streamlined the process for hiring employees?" Federal employees in general indicated these as areas for improvement.

Over the last few years, FSIS recognized the critical need to simplify travel regulations. Some of our recently implemented changes are:

- Streamlining travel by increasing the receipt threshold from \$25 to \$75; and increasing the number of employees who have access to the ATM feature of the Government charge-card program, which will eliminate the paperwork associated with obtaining travel advances from the National Finance Center (NFC).
- Transmitting all travel vouchers electronically to NFC. FSIS is in the top 10% of USDA agencies for travel voucher accuracy.
- Streamlining the reimbursement processes for relocating employees. Employees may now elect to be reimbursed a fixed amount reimbursement (FAR) for both temporary quarters and house hunting trips. The FAR eliminates the requirement for lodging receipts and detailed itemization of meal costs. Additionally, the Agency is proposing to pay a home marketing incentive to employees who participate in the relocation services program and find an outside buyer for their residences.

Likewise, we are continuously looking for ways to streamline our hiring practices. Some recent improvements are:

- Accepting applications by e-mail for all headquarters positions and for some scientific positions in the field.
- Maintaining an inventory of employees who wish voluntary reassignment for food inspector and inplant veterinary positions.
- Accepting on a continuing basis applications for frequently filled positions, including inplant veterinary medical officers, field compliance officers, and headquarters clerical and secretarial positions.
- Using monthly promotion panels to evaluate applications for food inspector positions for both recurring and announced vacancies.

While we believe that we have made progress in these important areas highlighted by the NPR Survey, it is important to note that we are continuously looking for ways to improve our processes. It is clear we can further strengthen communication of our customer service and streamlining efforts to our workforce. I encourage you to make suggestions wherever you think that we as an agency can improve our service to you and the other customers. We will ask some of you to participate in another survey this fall. I hope that all of FSIS is doing everything possible to meet your needs and those of all our customers.

Thank you.